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STATE MEMORIAL



Hedrich-Blessing



STATE OF ILLINOIS

MT. PULASKI COURT HOUSE

Abraham Lincoln was probably as well acquainted with the Mt. Pulaski Court House as any building in the old Eighth Circuit. This fine brick building, standing today as it did in Lincoln's time, is maintained as one of Illinois' memorials to its most outstanding citizen.

The court house is an excellent example of Greek revival architecture as found in Illinois. Prominent men associated with this historic building include David Davis, Stephen A. Douglas, Robert G. Ingersoll, John T. Stuart, Stephen T. Logan, William H. Herndon, James C. Conklin, Milton Hay, Leonard Swett, Asahel Gridley, Lawrence Weldon, Benjamin S. Edwards and a coterie of other brilliant attorneys.

The first Logan County court house was at Postville now in the southwest part of Lincoln. This building was purchased in 1929 by Henry Ford and stands in Greenfield Village at Dearborn, Michigan. The State has reproduced this building on its original site where it stands as a state memorial.

Court sessions were held in Postville between 1840 and 1848. In 1847 the booming town of Mt. Pulaski, named for Count Casimir Pulaski of Revolutionary War fame, offered a business block and a new building as an inducement to move the county seat. The Mt. Pulaski backers won the resulting election. To build the court house the citizens raised \$2,700 which was supplemented by a county appropriation of \$300.

The court house, which is 70% intact today, served the county until 1853 when the county seat by legislation was moved to Lincoln. This thriving new community was named for the Springfield lawyer who was a trusted friend and attorney of the town's founders.

The Mt. Pulaski Court House was used as a schoolhouse until 1878, then as a city hall and jail, and finally as a post office and headquarters for various town officials. In 1936 it was acquired as a state memorial from the city of Mt. Pulaski and restoration work was begun.

In the restoration the state removed the partitions put in the building over the years thus giving it its original arrangement, took down the schoolhouse cupola and bell and restored the front door to its original appearance.

On removing the floor on the second story the original floor was found underneath intact with the holes for the spindles used in the judge's stand. On this floor the court and juror rooms are as when the structure was built.

In recent years the state has gradually been acquiring furniture proper for a court house of this period looking forward to the day when it will have the appearance it had in Lincoln's day. An interesting item is the gavel used by Judge David Davis when he held court here.

The late Judge Lawrence B. Stringer of Lincoln wrote of several interesting cases held in the court house in which Abraham Lincoln participated and one he called the "Horological Cradle."

"Another famous case tried by Mr. Lincoln at Mt. Pulaski was what was known as the "horological cradle case." The cause involved the trade of an alleged patent on a cradle for a valuable tract of land.

"The patent as described by Mr. Lincoln in his declaration was "a cradle, rocked by machinery, with weights running on pulleys, the cradle the pendulum and which

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being wound up would rock itself until it ran down, thus saving time to mothers and nurses." Lincoln operated the cradle in open court and when Judge Davis asked, "how the thing could be stopped when desirable," Mr. Lincoln replied:

"It's like some of the glib talkers you and I know, Judge, it won't stop until it runs down."

"Mr. Lincoln took the cradle to his office in Springfield, where he operated it in his leisure time. Exhibiting it to John W. Bunn, a Springfield banker, upon Bunn asking the same question as Davis, Lincoln made a similar reply. At the same term of court, Mr. Lincoln tried another patent case involving a "cast-iron tombstone."

The Mt. Pulaski courtroom saw much of Lincoln who for nearly a quarter of a century rode the circuit, first as a partner of John T. Stuart, later as an associate of Stephen T. Logan, and finally as a senior member of the firm of Lincoln and Herndon, a partnership dissolved by Lincoln's assassination.

One of Mt. Pulaski's leading attorneys was Samuel C. Parks and also associated with him. Parks gathered the cases and Lincoln joined him in the trials. Lincoln had similar associations in other counties.

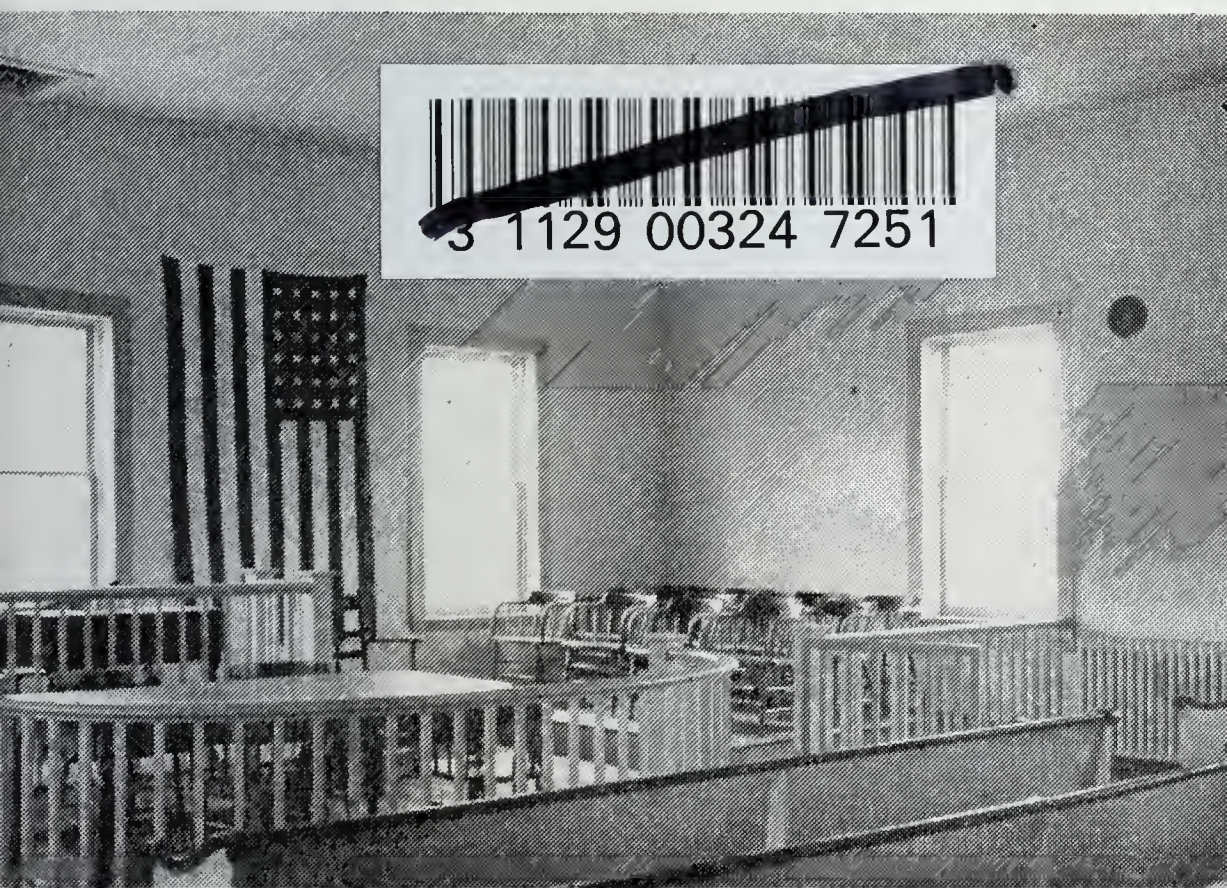
During most of his career at the bar Lincoln spent nearly half his time away from Springfield riding from county to county, at first on a horse he groomed himself, later in a rig, and trying cases throughout a territory that at one time or another took in the counties of Logan, McLean, Tazewell, DeWitt, Vermilion, Champaign, Woodford, Mason, Sangamon, Christian, Moultrie, Shelby, Edgar and Piatt.

By turn, moody and ebullient, cracking jokes and fraternizing or sitting alone, Lincoln was one of the most popular of the itinerant company of barristers who traveled the circuit.

Over the entire area, which took in one-fifth of the State of Illinois, his was familiar figure. Gaunt, tall, with disproportionally long legs and unusually large hands and feet, he cared little for personal appearance, but was recognized for his sound knowledge, his common-sense and his endless store of wit.

Historians agree that these years at Mt. Pulaski, Metamora and other towns on this route, had much to do with his later greatness.

The restored courtroom





In use as a school house

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